

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: PBOR, PLOS, EFIS, NS, GY
SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF JURISDICTION ISSUE ON CORENTYNE RIVER

REF: (A) 77 PARAMARIBO 1393, (B) PARAMARIBO 03, (C) GEORGETOWN 356

1. GUYANA CHRONICLE OF JANUARY 26 CARRIED STORY BY MOHAMED HAMALUDIN ABOUT A MEETING SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 26 BETWEEN FONMIN FRED WILLS AND FISHERMEN AND OTHER RESIDENTS OF THE CORENTYNE COAST ON SURINAMESE POLICIES ON LICENSES TO FISH IN THE CORENTYNE RIVER. THE SURINAMESE GOVERNMENT EXERCISES JURISDICTION OVER THE ENTIRE RIVER, UP TO THE HIGH WATER MARK ON THE GUYANESE SIDE (WEST BANK). LICENSES TO FISH IN THE RIVER, VALID FOR ONE YEAR, WERE NOT RENEWED FOR GUYANESE FISHERMEN THIS MONTH. THE MEETING WAS BILLED AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WILLS TO HEAR THE EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHO HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE SURINAMESE NON-RENEWAL OF THE LICENSES. RE-
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PORTEDLY OVER 100 FISHERMEN HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE POLICY AND HAVE SENT A PETITION TO PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM PROTESTING THE ATTITUDE OF THE SURINAMESE GOVERNMENT.

2. WILLS WAS QUOTED IN THE JANUARY 27 CHRONICLE AS PLEDGING THAT THE GOG WOULD NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO INTERFERE WANTONLY WITH THE MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD OF GUYANESE. WILLS

REVEALED THAT HE WOULD BE TRAVELING TO SURINAM SHORTLY FOR TALKS WITH THE GOS ON THE RIVER ISSUE. "OUR PURPOSE IS CLEAR CUT. WE WANT A PEACEFUL REGIME. WE ARE NOT A WARLIKE NATION", SAID WILLS. WILLS FELT THAT THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CORENTYNE PROBLEM WOULD HAVE A BEARING ON FISHING FOR THE ENTIRE ATLANTIC SEABOARD FROM VENEZUELA TO BRAZIL.

3. THE JANUARY 26 HAMALUDIN ARTICLE QUOTES "DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS IN GEORGETOWN" AS SAYING THAT THE CORENTYNE RIVER WAS REGARDED AS A NEUTRAL WATERWAY BY BOTH COUNTRIES UNTIL THE 1920S WHEN NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN OVER THE OWNERSHIP OF THE RIVER AND THE NEW RIVER TRIANGLE IN THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF GUYANA. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED IN PRINCIPLE THAT GUYANA'S SOVEREIGNTY WOULD BE RECOGNIZED OVER THE NEW RIVER AREA IN RETURN FOR SURINAMESE OWNERSHIP OF THE ENTIRE CORENTYNE RIVER UP TO THE HIGH WATER MARK. HAMALUDIN RELATES THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS NEVER FORMALLY SIGNED AND THAT SURINAM'S RENEWAL OF ITS CLAIM TO THE NE RIVER TRIANGLE SHOULD MEAN THAT THE CORENTYNE RIVER WOULD REVERT BACK TO ITS ORIGINAL, "NEUTRAL", STATUS.

4. RECENT PRESS REPORTS HAVE ALSO MAINTAINED THAT GUYANESE LOGGERS USING THE CORENTYNE TO FLOAT LOGS TO RIVERSIDE SAWMILLS HAVE BEEN HAMPERED BY THE CHANGE IN SURINAMESE POLICIES. ON JANUARY 20 A DELEGATION REPRESENTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SENTING GUYANESE TIMBERMEN, HEADED BY SHAFULLA NAZIR, PRESIDENT OF THE UPPER CORENTYNE SAWMILLERS ASSOCIATION, MET WITH SURINAMESE COMMISSIONER B.P. BHAROS OF NICKERIE. A STORY IN THE JANUARY 24 GUYANA CHRONICLE STATED THAT BHAROS HAD GIVEN THE GUYANESE VERBAL ASSURANCES THAT THEY COULD CONTINUE TO USE THE RIVER BUT WOULD NOT GIVE A WRITTEN GUARANTEE.

5. ALLEGATIONS HAVE ALSO APPEARED IN THE PRESS THAT GUYANESE NATIONALS HAVE BEEN "BUMPED OFF" THE LAUNCH THAT PLIES BETWEEN SPRINGLANDS AND NICKERIE IN SPITE OF THEIR HOLDING TICKETS. FIRST PREFERENCE IS BEING GIVEN TO SURINAMERS WITH ANY VACANT SEATS GOING TO GUYANESE. SCORES OF GUYANESE ARE SAID TO HAVE MADE COMPLAINTS TO SURINAMESE AUTHORITIES IN NICKERIE.

6. MOST OF THE PRESS REPORTS HAVE LINKED THESE PROBLEMS TO GUYANESE SEIZURE OF SURINAMESE BASED FISHING TRAWLERS AND THE HEAVY FINES LEVIED AGAINST THEIR CAPTAINS. THE GUYANA BROADCASTING SYSTEM HAS CARRIED PRIME MINISTER ARRON'S DENIAL OF THE LINKAGE IN ITS NEWS BROADCASTS BUT THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE CONTINUE TO MAKE

THE CONNECTION.
BURKE

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